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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; ARGENTINE-VENEZUELAN RELATIONSHIP;
MEXICO-MERCOSUR TIES; 08/07/07

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's key international stories are related to the bilateral relationship between Argentina and Venezuela; and Brazilian President Lula reinforcing an alliance between Mexico and Brazil.

2. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "Two presidents, among jokes and praising speeches"

Guido Braslavsky, political columnist of leading "Clarín," writes (08/07) "The privileged relationship of mutual fascination between the governments of Argentina and Venezuela was patent in yesterday's speeches, which were full of praise and thank-you statements from both sides. Beyond the political understanding between Nestor Kirchner and Hugo Chavez, the two of them also showed the positive rapport between them.

"The Venezuelan leader had already made explicit his support for Senator Cristina Fernández's bid for the Argentine presidency. He made clear that he was not concerned about allegations that he is getting involved in the domestic affairs of another country. Audacity is one of his features and perhaps this is why it was not surprising that he reiterated his support for Cristina's bid at the Casa Rosada..."

- "(Argentina's) ties to Venezuela"

Conservative "La Prensa" editorializes (08/07) "Following President Kirchner's recent trip to Mexico, the visit of the Venezuelan president to Argentina was marked by the search of new economic deals aimed at solving our energy crisis and funding Argentine securities in the international market. However, the visit of Chavez also raised different reactions from several sectors.

"... Some time ago, the Venezuelan president underscored that energy cooperation amounts to 1.6 billion dollars per year, which surpasses aid from the USG... According to the Center for International Policy, an American NGO, the amount is similar to US anti-drug and development assistance for Latin America this year. Venezuela's increasing influence in the region has generated friction in political and economic circles, in which Argentina has frequently intended to mediate, although the results have not always been favorable.

"... The Argentine Government should listen to the expressions of concern from some sectors of the local Jewish community due to Caracas' rapprochement and Venezuela's prioritizing its ties to Iran in the region, which has also been disapproved of by the US and other countries of the region.

"Under no circumstances, do energy and financial deals justify support for this stance, and, in this regard, we should stress the recent acknowledgement made by US legislators and international institutions vis-à-vis the Argentine Judiciary's ratification of the international warrant for former Iranian government officials due to their alleged involvement in the AMIA bombing case. An explicit acknowledgement of those issues would also be a sign of common sense and pragmatism."

- "Lula also approaches Mexico to Mercosur"

Gerardo Albarrn de Alba, Mexico-based correspondent for left-of-center "Pagina 12," writes (08/07) "Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva arrived in Mexico with the purpose of reinforcing negotiations towards an alliance between the two countries, which started when Felipe Calderon made his first international trip as president-elect last October and gave a wink to the rest of Latin America.

"Meetings between Lula and Calderon continued in Georgetown, in the Rio Group meeting, and during the G8 meetings in Berlin. Mexico's attitude of looking again to the South (which was abandoned by the latest PRI administrations and by Fox because they focused their foreign policy on the US and the NAFTA) seemed to gain impetus with the visits of the Brazilian president and Argentine President Nestor Kirchner (who was accompanied by presidential candidate Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner).

"... Yesterday, Lula invited Mexico to look to the South and join Mercosur, just like Kirchner did last week as part of an integration process that should be considered the strongest in Latin America, for which (Latin American) leaders should take advantage of the current 'huge and extraordinary opportunities.' Kirchner called on businessmen from both countries not to be afraid of becoming transnational corporations."

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